



Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen Minutes
Tuesday, October 20, 2020 –7:00 p.m.
VIA TELECONFERENCE

Meetings normally held at the Municipal Offices are being held remotely, with adequate, alternative means of public access and, where required, public participation provided, in accordance with the Governor's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c.30A § 20.

Board of Selectmen:

Chair Charles Sokol, Selectman Ed Silva, Vice-Chair Joanne Semanie

Staff:

Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary, Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Assistant to the Boards, Fire Chief Dennis Annear, Police Chief Julie Shippee, Highway Superintendent Lance Larned, Library Director Molly Lane, MLP Manager David Dvore, Treasurer Terry Green, Principal Bill Knittle, Board of Assessors Chair Rick Williams, School Committee Chair Susie Zavotka, Board of Health Chair Maggie Rice
Finance Committee: Wayne Zavotka, Paul McLatchy III, Loretta Dionne, C. Selmi Hyytinen, Laurie Pike

Audience of Citizens:

Call to Order: Chair Sokol called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

Roll Call Vote: Chair Sokol- yes Selectman Silva- yes Vice-Chair Semanie- yes
(Vote: 3-0-0)

Announcement of recording devices: one

Noteworthy Announcements (as needed): None

Roundtable Discussion Hosted by the Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair Wayne Zavotka opened the meeting by welcoming participants and explained the purpose of the meeting is to provide an opportunity to hear from other boards and committees about ongoing projects and goals.

Cemetery Commission:

Joanne Semanie reporting as a Cemetery Commission member, said the Commission is researching costs to perform stone stabilizations and restoration as many stones are in disrepair and fading due to acid rain. She said she would be providing more detail during the budget process and separate out operations with special projects.

Park Commission:

Chair Laurie Pike hoped the Park would be fully operational in 2021. The Commission requested funding for a new playground structure, and it was to be voted on at Special Town Meeting (STM). It is to be a

wooden play structure and installed next Spring for the Summer. Commissioners completed a Forest Stewardship Plan that was part of a grant through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and now deciding what work from the plan that can be accomplished. The full study is on the town website for review. The work involves plantings, old growth interpretive sites for education, enhancing bird habitat that will foster forest resiliency in climate change. A second grant was awarded for \$20,000.00 to be used to add educational kiosks, new trail signs and improved and updated maps.

Board of Selectmen:

Chair Sokol said the Board is looking into adding security upgrades to expand from what is soon to be added to the Safety Complex building. There may be some issues with the water system for town buildings as they may be some leaks and the source has not yet been located. The emergency communication radio system will be upgraded for the Police and Fire Depts. to join the state-wide system. Chair Sokol introduced Terry Green, the new Town Treasurer.

Board of Health:

Chair Maggie Rice said the Board of Health has been extremely busy with Covid-19 response and attending meetings. The Covid-19 Task Force continues to meet each Tuesday. The Board is still working to fill the Town Nurse position and it has been difficult with little response. There is paving scheduled at the Refuse Gardens outside the trash compactor. The paper compactor will be up and running soon. The Board is talking about the possibility of adding security monitoring to discourage illegal dumping. Chair Rice said she has been in meetings with regional health officials and the topic of Thanksgiving and the spread of Covid-19 is being discussed.

School Committee:

School Committee Chair Susie Zavotka shared the projects they are working on:

- Surge protector for the fire pump
- HVAC variable speed device
- Fire controller
- Booster for the dish washer
- Researching and preparing bids for a new tractor since the old one needed extensive repair
- Increasing security and monitoring
- A wish list item is to find a way to add solar panels to reduce electricity consumption and cost

Rowe Elementary School Principal:

Principal Bill Knittle was happy to report no Covid-19 cases and explained how they reinvented the school inside and out, incorporating inside and outside classrooms and promoting outdoor education. Using technology and combining in classroom and remote learning, parents can choose their options. It took a huge effort to get school ready and Principal Knittle said the children and parents are very happy to be back in school.

Broadband:

Municipal Light Plant Manager David Dvore reported that the construction of the broadband network was essentially completed and was finishing up a few last home installations and the siding and roof on the broadband hut. Outstanding is a \$500,000.00 state house note borrowed from the \$700,000.00 that was borrowed following the repayment of \$200,000.00 from a portion of a state grant. At the end of the first year in operation, we just received a check for a little over \$4,900.00 and an additional \$13,000.00 will be

put into a depreciation reserve account set aside for equipment replacement and repair. With more towns joining the WiredWest cooperative and sharing the overhead, costs should continue to decrease with more profit.

Library:

Library Director Molly Lane reported that not very much is going on at the Library due to Covid-19. It is open on a limited basis for curb-side pickup and individual or household visits by appointment that were spread out with sanitizing in between. Molly said she had received a 'library of things' grant amount for \$2500.00 and was purchasing some electric power tools. The library hours are currently Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Thursday 3:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Fire Dept:

Fire Chief Dennis Annear reported that the new keycard system for the doors will be installed in November. Training is ongoing in the Dept. and he felt there will be a need to review the mid-size trucks since they are aging out and do most of the medical calls. Chief Annear said he is advertising for a part-time position to do administrative work, answer medical calls and work with the Board of Health.

Assessors:

Board of Assessors Chair Rick Williams said that the new tax rate was set, and taxes would remain at 5.33 for residential and up a bit for commercial/industrial/personal property at 8.64. The bills would be sent to taxpayers this week. Chair Williams said the big issue that has been unresolved are the abatement filed by the utility companies that were to yet go before the Appellate Tax Board (ATB) for FY19 and FY20. In FY19 the values of utilities were appraised much higher, causing the companies to file for abatements. Due to Covid-19, the ATB is not meeting so the cases are unresolved. The Board has funded the Assessors' Overlay fund if decisions of the board to reject abatement requests are reversed. Chair Williams sees no other changes in the coming year.

Police Chief:

Chief Shippee said there was not much to report in the police dept. She noted that the dept. may have to purchase repeater devices to increase the range of the new emergency communication radios. She is working on pricing them and how many may be required. Chief Shippee sent Officer Sweeney to attend the required civil rights training required for Police Depts. Next year new bullet proof vests will be needed to purchase as required by law.

Highway Dept:

Highway Superintendent Lance Larned reported the crew was busy with culvert cleaning and leaf eradication. He noted that there were many storms with lots of tree debris to deal with. The funding for the Yankee Road was still unknown since the Transportation Bond Bill was still in discussion in the state senate. Superintendent Larned said the dept. had worked on maintenance this summer on Davis Mine and Davenport roads.

Budget FY22 Planning:

CIRPP: Finance Committee Member Paul McLatchy III explained the Capital Improvement Repair and Property Plan (CIRPP) Request Form that is to be used to request major upgrades, new projects valued

over \$25,000.00, repairs valued at least \$15,000.00 and property purchase or replacement of at least \$10,000.00. He indicated that there was an explanation sheet that accompanied the form.

Budget Worksheets: FY22 Budget Worksheets will be sent out to each Dept. or Committee by November 6, 2020 to be returned by January 1, 2021.

Budget Hearings: FY22 Budget Hearing will start on Monday, January 18th with ½ hour slots and, most likely, be in the Zoom meeting format.

COLA: At their recent meeting, the Board of Selectmen voted to recommend the Cost of Living Adjustment be 2.5% after reviewing the federal social security recommended amount of 1.3%.

Levy Limit: Board of Assessors Chair Williams said the levy limit increased leaving the town with an excess of over \$800,000.00. He said that while that was available, that depts. exercise restraint in the event changes occur in the future.

Adjournment:

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Sokol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie.

Roll Call Vote: Chair Sokol- yes Selectman Silva- yes Vice-Chair Semanie- yes
(Vote: 3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

Approval Date: OCTOBER 29, 2020

Approved:



Chuck Sokol, Chair



Ed Silva, Selectman



Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair

Documents:

1. Agenda October 20, 2020